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SIPDIS
SENSITIVE

STATE FOR AF/C AND S/USSES
NSC FOR GAVIN
SECDEF FOR DASD HUDDLESTON

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MASS](#) [PREF](#) [PHUM](#) [CD](#)
SUBJECT: GOC CONSIDERS RETROFITTED C-130H AIRCRAFT TO MEET
AIRLIFT NEEDS

11. (SBU) This is an Action Message -- see para 8.

SUMMARY

12. (SBU) The Government of Chad remains interested in acquiring C-130 aircraft to fulfill its significant airlift needs, despite earlier unsuccessful attempts to procure C-130Js through FMS. GOC-USG conversations during the June 28-29, 2009 visit by Presidential Special Envoy Scott Gration and the July 3-6, 2009 visit by Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for African Affairs Ambassador Vicki Huddleston have revived efforts on both sides to find an effective way forward. SE Gration discussed both the merits and drawbacks of the new C-130Js versus older but retrofitted models with President Deby. DASD Huddleston underscored USG willingness to assist Chad and suggested an assessment team evaluate Chad's air transport needs and provide recommendations to both governments. We are encouraged that there may well be a viable and mutually agreeable way forward on this issue and request that the Department engage with DASD Huddleston's office to realize the implementation of a State-DOD assessment team. END SUMMARY.

CHAD STRATEGIC AIR TRANSPORT NEEDS

13. (SBU) Chad is three times the size of California with less than 1,000 miles of paved road. With over 400,000 refugees and internally displaced persons in the East -- some 600 miles across the country from the capital -- the Government of Chad (GOC) has an irrefutable need for significant air transport capabilities. The GOC has been unsuccessful in its attempts to purchase C-130Js from the U.S. during the last 18 months, but nevertheless remains committed to sourcing its airlift capability from the U.S. At the time, the GOC was interested in three top-of-the-line, expensive C-130J, which would have required full pre-payment of 500 million USD and necessitated a multi-year wait. The U.S. Congress ultimately denied approval for the sale in (month) 2008 when it became clear that the GOC was having trouble coming up with financing for the purchase.

14. (SBU) GOC-USG conversations during the June 28-29 visit by Special Envoy Scott Gration and the July 3-6 visit by Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for African Affairs Ambassador Vicki Huddleston have revived hopes on both sides

of finding an effective way forward.

GRATION OUTLINES MERITS OF OLDER MODELS

15. (SBU) SE Gration was invited to a small, casual dinner hosted by GOC President Idriss Deby Itno following their official meeting earlier June 29, an honor only accorded to French PM De Villepin, French FM Joubert, and EU High Representative Solana in recent memory. The dinner was attended by some of Deby's closest senior advisors, including Minister of Infrastructure Adoum Younousmi, Intelligence Chief Chaibo, and Chadian Ambassador to Washington Bechir; a major portion of the conversation centered on the sought-after C-130s. Gration, speaking pilot-to-pilot with Deby, explained both the merits and drawbacks of the different C-130 options, including the new J-model and retrofitted earlier E- and H-models. Deby, along with Younousmi (who is the President's chief advisor on government spending), seemed to agree with the Special Envoy that it would be worthwhile to consider retrofitted H-models as a useful alternative to the J-model for a country like Chad with pressing social and economic development needs and budgetary constraints.

HUDDLESTON PROPOSES A WAY FORWARD

16. (SBU) DASD Huddleston, during July 5-6 meetings with the
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Minister of Defense and other MOD officials, conveyed USG willingness to assist the GOC in meeting its strategic airlift needs. DASD Huddleston specifically proposed that an assessment team -- ideally made up of U.S. military air and acquisition experts and State representatives -- visit Chad soon to conduct a technical appraisal of Chad's needs and to evaluate the USG's ability to meet those needs. The assessment visit would conclude with recommendations to both governments on a solution within Chad's means.

COMMENT

17. (SBU) It seems to us that President Deby and Minister Younousmi indicated more willingness to consider the older retrofitted aircraft described by SE Gration and supported by DASD Huddleston than did AMB Bechir and Air Force Chief Orozi, both firm adherents of the C-130Js. That encourages us to believe that we may well have a new way forward on this issue, one that considers alternatives to the C-130Js. There is a legitimate, demonstrable need by the GOC for strategic air transport, but alternatives to the costly J-model should be explored more intensively at the appropriate political and technical levels. END COMMENT.

ACTION REQUEST

18. (SBU) That the Department cooperate closely with DASD Huddleston's office to facilitate the travel of a State-DOD assessment team to Chad as soon as practicable.

19. (U) This cable has been cleared by SE Gration's staff but not by DASD Huddleston's staff.

110. (U) Minimize considered.
NIGRO